



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



**FY15 Q1 Report: January 1 – March 31, 2015**

**Program: Advancing Solutions for Peace through Intercommunity  
Reconciliation and Engagement (ASPIRE)**

**Submitted: May 9, 2016**  
*(with update May 15, 2016)*

**PROJECT SUMMARY**

Award No: AID-OAA-A-15-00063

Start Date: November 1 2015

End Date: October 31, 2017

Report Date: January 31 , 2016

Total Award: 1,170,000 USD

## A. Executive Summary

The goal of Advancing Solutions for Peace through Intercommunity Reconciliation and Engagement (ASPIRE) is to enable community leaders of all faiths and disaffected youth to work together to peacefully manage inter-group tensions, rebuild community cohesion and strengthen pluralism in the strategic town of Bouar. This will be achieved through a holistic people-to-people approach that: 1) facilitates inclusive, community-led processes to mitigate current and future conflicts; 2) increases economic cooperation across lines of division; and 3) positively changes attitudes towards tolerance and non-violence.

During the reporting period, Mercy Corps continued to work with local authorities, major religious platforms, and local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to implement activities. Peace committees were formed, trained and information about the program was disseminated across the project target area (19 meetings).

## B. Program Overview

During this reporting period Mercy Corps organized a total of 19 meetings with project partners and communities in Bouar and surrounding villages to inform them of the program; supported the creation of 10 peace committees; conducted trainings for peer educators and peace committee members in mediation, facilitation, dispute resolution, do no harm and multi-stakeholders dialogue process. Overall, the project reached a total of 36 peer educators and 73 members of peace committees.

Mercy Corps also help to set-up 13 structures for the management of micro-projects, the COGES-PC and organized training reaching 118 COGES-PC members. Working with partners Mercy Corps also organized 529 awareness sessions for the communities on the 12 thematic of social cohesion. Mercy Corps work with community leaders to produce 9 peace messages that will be used for the peacebuilding radiobroadcasting campaign.

## C. Security

The security situation in Bouar has remained relatively calm during this reporting period. However, the heavy presence of armed groups under the general Sidiki from ex-seleka in the area of the Yellewa, Bessan, Abbla and the axe of Yongoro, awaiting the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) was a potential threat to the security. In these areas security incidents involving armed groups continue to be regularly reported.

## D. Performance Summary

**Staff recruitment:** The project manager resigned and left his position in March 2016. Mercy Corps has launched the recruitment process for an international project manager and the search continues. The head of office in Bouar and the Protection Manager, with the continued work of the field staff and the support of the grants manager is covering the project activities in the interim. Mercy Corps headquarters has also sent program staff to assist in covering oversight of activities, USG visits and liaising on evaluation-related activities involving ASPIRE to ensure consistent coverage and progression of activities. In addition, Mercy Corps is assessing the possibility to have a longer-term TDY from the region as interim Project Manager (international) until a replacement is identified.

**Project Presentation:** during the reporting period, Mercy Corps continued to meet with local authorities (Prefect, Sous-Prefect, Mayor, neighborhood Chiefs), UN agency representatives, religious and community leaders, women and youth association representatives and civil society representatives. The team participated in coordination meetings with humanitarian actors to present the project and progress achieved since its start in November 2015. In total, Mercy Corps organized or participated in 19 stakeholder or coordination meetings.

**Objective 1: Facilitate inclusive, community-led processes to mitigate current and future conflicts**

**Activity 1.1. Form 10 Peace Committees comprised of community leaders, women, and youth, that meet regularly to review rising tensions and inter-group dispute resolution, and discuss interventions.** Mercy Corps continued to work with the Peace Committees reaching a total of 70 people including **33 women and 37 men**; 10 Muslims and 60 Christians.

**Activity 1.2 Train Peace Committees in mediation, facilitation, dispute resolution, Do No Harm, and multi-stakeholder dialogue processes.**

In February 2016, Mercy Corps conducted a training program on community outreach and educational techniques utilizing 11 modules of social cohesion including: peaceful coexistence, good relations, conflict, minority group rights, human rights, women's rights, return of displaced persons, Non-violence, peace, good governance, corruption). This activity reached 36 peers educators, including 9 women and 27 men, 6 Muslims and 30 Christians from Bouar and surrounding areas.

From 16 to 19 March 2016 and from 21 to 23 March 2016, Mercy Corps led an inter-community dialogue facilitation techniques training. The trainings, prepared and implemented by an expert in mediation, reached 73 representatives of peace committees and of the interreligious group of Bouar (PIRB in French), including 30 women.



Members of Peace Committees after a training

**Activity 1.3 Facilitate Peace Committees in organizing awareness sessions for community members to promote peaceful resolution of inter-group disputes and inter-group dialogue.**

During the reporting period, peace committee members were trained in techniques to organize awareness/outreach sessions for community members to promote peaceful resolution of inter-group disputes and inter-group dialogue. The awareness sessions for the community members will start in the coming weeks.

**Activity 1.4 Establish an early warning system to identify rising tensions before they become flashpoint conflicts.**

On 5 January 2016, Mercy Corps met with representatives of the police, armed forces and the Minusca to discuss the development and implementation of the early warning system (EWS) to be put in place during the third quarter and to obtain their input, ideas and ultimately buy-in. The meetings were positive and overall effective in starting to reach consensus on the EWS. Additional meetings are planned for the coming weeks.

**Objective 2: Increase economic cooperation across lines of division.**

## **Activity 2.1 Peace Committees organize community fora in Bouar to solicit inter-group economic and social projects.**

Mercy Corps supported peer educators, peace committee members and village chiefs to understand how to develop transparent and effective groups to ensure accurate community project identification that remain consistent with community expectations. Through this workshop, Mercy Corps helped set-up 13 structures for the management of microprojects, the COGES-PC and reached 118 COGES-PC members. These 13 COGES-PC are comprised of 7 to 9 members each and on average the COGES-PC are composed of 3 to 4 women.

In the workshops, Mercy Corps helped build the capacity of the peer educators, the peace committee members and community leaders on the management of COGES-PC, such as the use of COGES –PC, how to set up COGES –PC fairly and effectively so that they help to identify the community's needs. This included supporting the groups to effectively prioritize and develop relevant micro-projects that are suitable and compatible to community's expectations.

The peer educators, the peace committees and Mercy Corps working together organized 28 training sessions to assist the different communities in setting up a COGES – PC after the workshops. These sessions have reached 1,883 members of the community, including 686 women and 1,197 men.

## **Activity 2.2: Peace Committees transparently assess and select 20 social and economic projects.**

Prior microprojects selection by the peace committees, the team, with the committees jointly, has designed and translated (into Sango), the selection criteria and financing plans, so a consistent understanding by the committee members is shared. This will be disseminated and shared widely during this quarter.

## **Activity 2.3 Provide community members with training to build their financial, technical, vocational skills to ensure successful economic and social projects**

During the reporting period the team:

- Identified the different training modules and materials needed to provide administrative and financial management to community members;
- developed a template for the implementation tracking of the microprojects;
- updated the management tools of community projects;
- Developed a training guidebook for the trainees to use to manage their projects.

In total some 118 persons including 43 women and 75 men from the different COGES-PC have been trained on the concepts of a COGES-PC, their role/responsibility within the framework of ASPIRE program as well as the role and responsibilities of each COGES-PC members. On-going and next stage training will take place in the coming quarter.

## **Objective 3: Positively change public attitudes towards tolerance and non-violence.**

### **3.1 Local committees initiate conflict management and peacebuilding messaging campaign in Bouar that includes all groups**

The guidebook of community education was updated in early 2016 and from 2 to 4 February 2016, the peace committee members were trained in techniques of community education and outreach from this guidebook.

Following the training, the peace committee members organized awareness sessions in the community on three themes, including peaceful coexistence, and social cohesion and the conflict. These activities reached a total of 9,076 people including 2,220 women, 4,886 youth and 1,970 men.

In addition, nine peace messages relating to peaceful coexistence, social cohesion/good relationships in the community, the conflict overall, human rights, good governance, non-violence, return of refugees, and corruption were identified and broadcast in commercials. A recorded version of the messages are listened to and then approved or not by the ASPIRE team before the final version is broadcast.

Two peace messages and public visibility of the Peer Educators (36 T-shirts with the message: “*Christians and Muslims, we are all one family*”) and to the members of peace committee (100 T-shirts with the message : “*Muslims and Christians, it’s time for reconciliation!*”) are in circulation amid the community.

20 peace messages have been gathered from the community leaders and eight messages from the speeches of Pope François have been used to develop radio spots that will be broadcast to call upon the community to promote and actively engage in non –violence and tolerance in their communities.

### **3.2 Local committees participate in a national forum to share lessons learned and success.**

No update this reporting period.

### **Outcome of the national forum communicated back to community members.**

No update this reporting period.

## **E. Monitoring & Evaluation**

ASPIRE’S team has taken advantage of a training carried out by the monitoring and evaluation department focused on the M&E system of Mercy Corps and on preparing tools to collect indicator data. This training helped the project team to have a global understanding about the project reach and significance and the link between each result, indicators and activities to be carried out.

An emphasis has been put on both the reporting of quality and the assignment of monitoring and evaluation.

The ASPIRE baseline has been implemented from January 5-11, 2016 in the intervention zone of the project in order to document the current indicators and this activity has been led by DM&E team from Mercy Corps. The baseline utilized new technology for the data collection. The report of this baseline showed several elements where ASPIRE should be focused to have even more of an impact. The baseline will be shared when the document is finalized.

During each training the M&E team organized, a pre- post-test was implemented in order to assess the training value from the participants’ knowledge. The M&E for this period focused this quarter from January to March 2016. The M&E team has carried out two in-the-field visits to all of the intervention villages in order to share with the stakeholders and local authorities their perception in terms of the implementation strategy of ASPIRE project. At the same time three focal points related to the management of complaints have been identified and equipped with a view to deeply investigate the information relating to recipients complaints in terms of the project.

## **A. Conclusion and Upcoming Activities**

The program continues to move forward per the quarterly work plan of activities. All expectations and plans have been carried out on time.

The launch of media sensitization campaigns will be pushed back slightly due to the fact that the first version of audio messages must be reviewed by the service provider first, before they can be disseminated.

The launch of both the resolution of conflict and mediation was delayed; since this activity is closely linked to the peace committee training, this activity is going to be launched with important coaching from the ASPIRE team to the peace committee members. The training and the post-tests have revealed that the level of literacy has been an impediment to the success of trainees and consequently, the dissemination/implementation of inter –community dialogue facilitation techniques. In addition, the mediation of conflict resolution by the committee members are only possible through the team's thorough coaching.

### **ACTIVITY PLAN FOR UP COMING QUARTER (FY16Q3)**

- Train the community leaders on the early warning system;
- Monitoring and supporting the Peer Educators (PE) in their education sessions;
- Develop a monitoring and coaching plan for Peace Committees under conflict resolution and the organization of inter-community dialogues;
- Complete the set-up of inter-community projects management (COGES-PC);
- Finish off the training of COGES-PC on the concept, its assignment and the COGES-PC members' roles and responsibilities;
- Organize consistent, regular meeting with the inter-religious platform of Bouar;
- Organize the community fora for the presentation of inter-community projects and their criteria of choice to be financed;
- Train the community and peer educators on the process of tendering, shortlisting and selecting community microprojects;
- Fully start implementing projects and start up the funding;
- Validate the commercial and peace messages broadcasted by SIRIRI radio, service provider of collecting and broadcasting peace messages;
- Identify and make contract with the radio stations for the broadcasting of messages.